

VZCZCXRO6773  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHUJA #2446/01 3311401  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 271401Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1517  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 8326  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002446

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KCOR](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: CANDIDATE FOR NIGERIAN RULING PARTY CHAIR  
DISCUSSES THE PARTY'S FUTURE

REF: A. ABUJA 02231  
[1](#)B. ABUJA 002303

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Anyim Pius Anyim, former Senate President and contender the Chairmanship of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) predicted the fall of current Senate President David Mark and affirmed his dedication to democratic principles at all levels of government, including within the PDP. Describing "massive" anti-Obasanjo sentiment in the PDP, Anyim was optimistic about his chances of gaining the Chairmanship and shared plans to roll back recent anti-democratic institutional changes imposed upon the party. Anyim also hinted that, though President Yar'Adua will not public endorse anybody, he "looked favorably" upon Anyim's candidacy. A respected former Speaker of the House Ghali Na'Abba has since publicly endorsed Anyim. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Anyim Pius Anyim (protect) of Ebonyi state, former Senate President (2000-03) and contender the Chairmanship of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) told PolOffs in a private meeting November 20 that current Senate President David Mark's days are numbered. Anyim maintained that the coup de grace will be investigations, both German and Nigerian, of alleged bribery by Siemens of former government officials -- if the Benue election tribunal does not nullify Mark's election first. Though Mark is not yet implicated in the Siemens affair and his tenure as Federal Communications Minister predates the current scope of the inquiry, Anyim believes the investigation has opened a Pandora's box of allegations which will likely not end with the time periods and names already made public. Anyim dismissed the current home renovation and budget padding allegations against Mark as misplaced and inconsequential, and confirmed that the Senate has paid for live television coverage of hearings in the past. (Mark has been accused of improperly paying for coverage of hearings, with the insinuation that it was for purposes of graft.) He also expressed doubt that Senator George Akume was behind the allegations against Mark. (reftels).

[1](#)3. (C) Anyim and businessman/PDP activist Daniel Richard characterized the upcoming election of a new PDP Chairman as a battle for generational change, with younger reform-minded members seizing an unprecedented moment to wrest political control from those who have led (and often plundered) Nigeria since independence. They predicted a fierce battle as the

older generation aggressively defends its influence, with its own past poor treatment of the opposition as a frame of reference for what losing might mean. Anyim and Richard were very optimistic about the prevailing reformist mood within the ruling party and what that might portend for Anyim's candidacy, and noted that, if it happens, it would be the first time the PDP Chair is competitively elected by members. They hope to capitalize on what they described as "massive" anti-Obasanjo sentiment. PolOff hoped the PDP would embrace truly democratic practices, and reverse the authoritarian tendencies of recent years.

14. (C) In response, Anyim declared his intention, if elected party chair, to relegate the PDP Board of Trustees (BOT), and its Chairman (former President Obasanjo), to its former status as a purely consultative body, while supporting President Yar'Adua's reform efforts. Anyim and Richard hinted that Anyim's candidacy was looked upon favorably by both "The Villa" (i.e., the office of the President) and the Integrity Group (the group within the House of Representatives which recently forced out the sitting Speaker in the face of corruption allegations), but said Yar'Adua will not publicly endorse any candidate for PDP Chair because he must work with whomever wins.

15. (U) Subsequent to the meeting, Anyim was publicly endorsed by former Speaker of the House of Representatives (1999-2003) Ghali Na'Abba who said "All right thinking Nigerians should vote for Pius Anyim. ... We should not be in the business of electing people who are not independent-minded (as PDP Chair), because they are not the ones that are going to run the office -- there are people who would run it for them. And these people have served and pushed Nigeria to the

ABUJA 00002446 002 OF 002

brink." In an interview with the press, Na'Abba also announced his intention to force former President Obasanjo to relinquish his position as Chairman of the Board of Trustees due to "zoning" considerations (under which key offices in Nigeria are divided among the country's six geopolitical zones). He noted that the newly-elected Speaker of the House was a representative from Ogun state (the same state as Obasanjo); he stated that "you cannot have the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the party and the Speaker of the House of Representatives from one state."

16. (C) Anyim's candidacy gives the anti-Obasanjo faction within the PDP a candidate to rally around who stayed in the party and, thus, whose qualifications for party chair cannot be challenged. After Yar'Adua's inauguration and the announcement of his PDP reconciliation efforts, party rules were amended to require two years of membership to contest for leadership positions. The two-year requirement was not specifically defined as cumulative or continuous, allowing for differing interpretations as to whether past membership would suffice. Some observers maintained that the provision was designed to prevent disaffected yet still influential former members of the PDP from returning to challenge Obasanjo's grip on the party.

7.(C) COMMENT: Pius Anyim is emerging as a serious contender for PDP Chairman to challenge the pro-Obasanjo camp's nominee, former Ebonyi Governor Sam Egwu, and gaining endorsements from influential and respected people. Political watchers in Abuja believe that if the Integrity Group cannot convince its preferred candidate, the previous Senate President Ken Nnamani, to run for party chair, the anti-Obasanjo bloc may coalesce around Anyim. He certainly, and not surprisingly, said all the right things regarding electoral reform and anti-corruption efforts.

18. (C) The endorsement of Anyim by Na'Abba, who recently returned to the PDP, could forestall the dilution of the anti-Obasanjo vote among multiple candidates. The objection on zoning grounds to Obasanjo's BOT Chairmanship could resonate within the PDP's rival regional factions, while

providing political cover for those who oppose Obasanjo for  
other reasons. END COMMENT.  
PIASCIK